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# Argument Objectivity and Ontological/Logical Pluralism: Must Arguments be Domain Sensitive?

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**Abstract:** Ontological pluralism raises interesting questions about the objectivity and universality of arguments and argument forms. Bruno Latour proposes that Science, Politics, Law, Fiction, and other domains are distinct “modes of existence,” each with its own set of “felicity” and “veridiction” conditions. If so, then are arguments and argument forms mode-dependent? I suggest that arguments and arguments forms can extend across multiple modes as long as they do not serve as *infelicity* conditions within those modes.

**Keywords:** Argument, domain, felicity, Latour, mode, objectivity, ontology, pluralism, relativism, veridiction

## 1. Introduction

In his recent work *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence: An Anthology of the Moderns*, Bruno Latour (2013) has proposed a pluralistic ontology comprised of a multiplicity of ontologically distinct domains or *modes of existence*, each of which has its own distinct *veridiction* and *felicity* conditions. To speak well, e.g., to be regarded as ‘objective’ within a given mode, one must follow the veridiction and felicity conditions peculiar to that mode, with no set of veridiction or felicity conditions applying universally across all modes. Thus what counts as speaking well will vary from mode to mode. On this pluralistic model ‘objectivity’ will be *multivocal* rather than *univocal*, for while each mode may have a sense of objectivity that is valid and real internal to that mode, objectivity will always be relative to some particular mode. It follows that there is no world as a ‘whole’ here, only a *collective* of multiple modes of existence. This raises interesting questions about the possibility of extending arguments and argument forms from one mode to another, for if objectivity is always relative to some given mode, then the same might be true for argument validity as well, with *validity* itself being *multivocal* rather than univocal. If so then it might seem to follow that arguments developed within one mode cannot cross over into another. I suggest that this need not be the case, for even if objectivity and validity are multivocal in the sense of being modally-relative it may still be possible for arguments and argument forms to apply across multiple modes of existence as long as they do not serve as infelicity conditions within the modes in question.

I should note at the outset that this paper is largely exploratory in nature. Its primary aim is not to propose any demonstrative arguments or proofs of any sort, but to outline some interesting and potentially important implications about the nature of ‘objectivity’ and the possibility of transporting arguments from one mode to another within a radically pluralistic context. As we shall see, Latour’s ontological pluralism stands as a radical and potentially important challenge to a highly dominant thread that runs throughout the western philosophical tradition, and this paper is simply part of a larger effort to take Latour’s challenge seriously. Any

conclusions drawn or suggestions provided in this paper are highly tentative and provisional, and should be approached and considered in the exploratory sense in which they are intended, not as ‘bricks and mortar’ but more as ‘feelers’ that are part of a larger attempt to see what might follow when we extend Latour’s radical pluralism to the kinds of questions and issues discussed here.

## 2. Modes of existence

Latour proposes a *relational* account of being or existence that he refers to as “being-as-other.” On this account, existence necessarily implies a relation to an *other*, so that it is not possible for something to exist without also *being-in-relation*. This is contrasted against what Latour identifies as the more traditional ontology of substance or “being-as-being” in which all being is grounded in something that is said exist independent of its relations to anything else (Latour, pp. 162-163). Latour rejects the more traditional ontology of substance in favor of what we might loosely call an ontology of alterity or *difference*, with difference standing as a constitutive, non-reducible condition of existence in the strong, ontological sense of that term.

On Latour’s account, a *mode* is a way of being or manner of existing in the strong ontological sense associated with being-as-other. As such modes are not substances, nor are modes grounded in substance as they might be in the philosophy of Descartes, Spinoza, or Locke. Instead, as an expression of the ontological condition of being-as-other, a mode of existence is best viewed, not as a relation as such but as a way or *manner of relating*, an activity that involves the connecting or passing along, across, through, or between otherwise discrete elements that we might think of as constituting its ‘base.’

As this entire inquiry attests, deprived of other beings, any existent whatsoever would cease at once to exist. Its very existence, its substance, is defined by the supreme duty to explore through what other beings it must pass to subsist, to earn its subsistence. This is what I have called its ARTICULATION. (Latour, 2013, p. 454)

A given mode of existence will be disclosed or expressed in the distinct character of its relations, with the mode itself being revealed in the unique manner in which the disparate, discrete elements underlying and enabling it are cobbled and hobbled together. As a manner of relating, the characteristics that define and distinguish one mode from another are best expressed, not as a noun, but as an adverbial qualification of some activity or process, e.g., the mode of being-Legally, Politically, Morally, and so on. In this ontology of alterity or difference it would seem to follow, of course, that there must be more than one mode of existence for each mode must draw upon the beings instituted by other modes for its own subsistence, with no single mode having ontological primacy over any other. Hence existence here is inherently co-relational, necessitating a pluralistic account of being as such.

As a manner of relating, a mode of existence will typically take the form of a *network* that is marked or distinguished by the unique manner in which the component elements that comprise each network are cobbled and hobbled together. Put crudely a mode exists by passing along, across, through, and so on, some series of elements, much like a flow of information might exist by passing along, across, and through a series of transmission towers, transmission lines, power stations, computer servers, computer terminals, satellites, technicians, users, and so on. The flow of information only exists as long as it is able to pass along these disparate, ‘base’ elements, but

such information is nevertheless still real as something distinct from the base elements upon which it depends. Put crudely and in a language that I suspect would make Latour cringe, the flow of information serves as something akin to the *reason for* the various elements in question being cobbled and hobbled together as they are, thus serving as something like the ‘final cause’ of the arrangement or network in question. In effect, the characteristics that distinguish a mode would be the answer to the question of ‘why’ the elements are arranged as they are. Modes of existence will typically have the character of a network in this broad sense as a pass along, across, through, or between otherwise disparate elements that seem to be gathered together in distinct, persistent, and sometimes surprising ways. In fact one of the first things we would look for when trying to determine if something counts as a mode of existence is whether it has the characteristics of a network of this sort, with different modes being identified by the different way or manner in which its elements have been gathered together, a condition which Latour (2013) refers to as the distinct *trajectory* and manner of *alteration* unique to and definitive of each mode (pp. 61-62).

In general there are a number of conditions that must be satisfied for something to qualify as a mode of existence: 1) Under the condition of being-as-other, there must be some kind of *hiatus* between elements across which the mode must *pass*, 2) The discrete elements that are being related or gathered together must have a *trajectory* as parts of a series or process, 3) The character of the trajectory must have a mode of *alteration* unique to that mode, 4) It must have its own unique *felicity* and *infelicity* conditions, and 5) It must give rise to *distinct beings* that it will institute as part of the furniture, if you will, of the *collective* (Latour, 2013, pp. 459, 488-489). While I will touch upon these conditions again in our discussion of arguments that cross various mode of existence, we should first say a few words about the role of felicity and infelicity conditions in Latour’s account, for these bear particular importance for the discussion at hand.

### 3. Felicity and infelicity conditions

Drawing upon the work of J. L. Austin, Latour takes up the idea of *felicity* and *infelicity* conditions as a way of affirming and contrasting “very different types of veridiction without reducing them to a single model” (Latour, 2013, p. 18). On Latour’s account, each mode of existence will have its own unique *veridiction* conditions that will determine what is to count as true or false, good and bad, better or worse, etc., within each mode (Latour, 2013, pp. 53-54). This means that the veridiction conditions that hold within one mode will not hold in the same exact manner (and in fact may not hold at all) within another mode. Thus while each mode will have its own standards of veridiction, it would be infelicitous to apply the standards operant within one mode to another mode, for each mode of existence is “incommensurable” with the others (Latour, 2013, p. 382). Attempting to apply the veridiction conditions of one mode of existence to another will generally result in what Latour calls (building upon the work of Gilbert Ryle) a *category mistake*, that is, a second-order or “second-degree” “mistake of *direction*” where one becomes disoriented as it were not because you don’t have a compass, but because the place in which you are now situated requires a very different *kind* of compass or orientation device than the one you are using (Latour, 2013, pp. 48-55). According to Latour, each mode of existence has its own *interpretive key* and failing to shift from one key to another when crossing from one mode to another will likely leave you talking at cross purposes with those who are properly attuned to the veridiction conditions of that mode, making you feel out of *place* or *off key* as it were. We see this kind of category mistake, claims Latour, whenever someone attempts

to apply the veridiction conditions appropriate to the mode of Reference (i.e., knowledge), for example, to the modes of Politics, Law, or Morality, scolding, ridiculing or condemning those operating within these other modes for not living up to the veridiction standards appropriate to the judging mode.

This raises the interesting and important question of how we are able to recognize that we are out of tune in the first place, for wouldn't such recognition imply the existence of a metalanguage that traverses all the modes? Latour responds here by identifying another mode call the *Prepositional* mode of existence whose primary function is to alert one to any shifts in interpretive key and to *pre-position* one to the new veridiction conditions that will follow without at the same time imposing its own veridiction conditions on the modes being signalled. Put simply, the Prepositional mode helps one to become attuned to the presence of another mode without specifying the veridiction conditions that will follow (which one must learn from within the mode being signalled by becoming properly attuned to that mode). In this sense Prepositions seem akin to what Jean-Luc Marion (2004) calls the purely denotative, self-effacing functions of an Icon, which rather than *representing* the other in its own terms merely *presents* the other as *it is* in *its* own manner of being (p. 77). Since the gesturing function of Prepositions works precisely by *not* imposing any veridiction conditions on the mode to which it alerts us, then it makes it possible to apprehend or recognize other modes as having their own interpretive key without at the same time serving as a universal ground for judging those other modes, thereby preserving the radical pluralism of Latour's framework. We will return to the important role of the Prepositional mode later in the discussion.

To conclude this section, felicity and infelicity conditions are important because they serve to protect, preserve, and advance the various modes of existence, each of which enables, defends, and advances important *values* that are specific to each mode. Infelicity conditions undermine the stability and ontological dignity of a given mode, threatening the unique values that are enabled and engendered by the mode in question. The best way of coming to recognize and appreciate the ontological dignity of a given mode and its unique values, on Latour's account, is either: 1) By regarding it from within the Prepositional mode, whose veridiction condition is marked by a special standard of 'neutrality' that works to present (or make present) other modes in a manner that emphasizes their place as one mode among many (a condition that emphasizes the pluralistic nature of being where no one mode is privileged over another), or 2) By becoming fully attuned to and immersed within the veridiction conditions constitutive of the mode in question, a process that will enable one to see the world from within that modal perspective or point of view.

#### **4. Illustrating some modal perspectives: Reference, law, politics, and ethics**

The pluralistic character of Latour's account is perhaps best illustrated by outlining the veridiction conditions of a select sample of the various modes of existence. In *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence* Latour identifies fifteen distinct modes of existence, but claims that there are likely many more modes beyond these, perhaps indefinitely more. For the purposes of this paper we will focus on four modes that are often discussed within the general field of Argumentation: Reference, Law, Politics, and Ethics. As I hope to show, while each mode has its own unique veridiction conditions, this does not seem to preclude the possibility of arguments or argument forms crossing over from one mode to another. The key factor in determining the legitimacy of such crossings is whether or not the arguments or argument forms in question are felicitous or

infelicitous for the mode in question. It is only when arguments or argument forms become infelicitous, threatening the integrity and stability of the mode in question that they become most problematic, a situation we ought to avoid out of respect for the dignity of the mode in question and the distinct yet important values it engenders and protects.

#### 4.1. The mode of being-Referentially

The distinct alteration that marks the mode of being-Referentially or *Reference* is the establishment of “chains of reference” that are aimed at disclosing or accessing “remote beings.” Chains of reference are comprised of all the diverse elements needed to access remote beings, an *informative* relation that can only be established and sustained through the bringing together of a diverse network of conditions. Thus in the case of a laboratory, for example, the chains of reference will include everything from the scientists and technicians who are seeking the information in question, to the buildings, institutions, administrators, lawyers, suppliers, couriers, and so on needed to construct and sustain the laboratory work required to access remote beings in an epistemically informative manner. All these elements together constitute a *network* of conditions that, gathered together as they are, constitute the Referential chain through which we secure a connection to the remote beings we are investigating or seeking to know. These networked chains of Reference function by enabling the instauration of what Latour calls “immutable mobiles,” i.e., *constants* which I interpret as including such things as ‘maps,’ ‘forms,’ ‘concepts,’ ‘rules,’ ‘laws,’ ‘theories,’ and so on, that enable the organization, transfer, accumulation, synthesis, classification, and testing of information in the form of “equipped and rectified knowledge” (Latour, 2013, pp. 75-77, 107). Importantly such *immutable mobiles* don’t pre-exist their chains of Reference but are *instaurated* alongside such chains, coming into being and becoming more refined, precise, detailed, articulated, and so on as the chains of Reference are strengthened and lengthened. Thus, in the case of a map, for example, it will become more precise, exact, detailed, and so on as the chains of Reference through which it is instaurated, e.g., the signposts, landmarks, elevations, distances, and so on, are more securely and thoroughly set out or established.

Immutable mobiles are not the only things instaurated through the work of constructing chains of Reference, for the very sense of ourselves as *knowing-subjects set against a world of objects-known* is another important outcome or by-product of such chains, a way of *being-in* or *relating-to* the collective that itself only arises through the work of such chains, where “both are products arising from the lengthening and strengthening of the chain” (Latour, 2013, p. 80). The unique sense of ‘objectivity’ that is characteristic of this Referential way of being-in or relating-to the collective becomes reinforced and strengthened as the chains of Reference to remote beings “lengthen and thicken.” Importantly the sense of ‘objectivity’ associated with this Referential way of being does not pre-exist the search for knowledge as a kind of transcendental precondition of inquiry, but is itself an outcome or product of the complex chains of Reference that give rise to equipped and rectified knowledge (Latour, 2013, pp. 90-92). “The more these chains lengthen, thicken, and become more instrumented, the more “there is” objectivity and the more “there is” objective knowledge that circulates in the world, available to speakers who want to plug into it or subscribe to it” (Latour, 2013, p. 90). It follows that *objective knowledge* in this equipped and rectified sense will always be a matter of degrees so that one can be more or less knowledgeable regarding a given class of remote beings depending on one’s familiarity with and involvement in the complex chains of Reference engendering the knowledge in question. Part of

the veridiction conditions of the Referential mode is the requirement that knowledge claims be supported (or at least supportable) by chains of Reference that enable access to the remote beings in question—no chain of Reference, no equipped and rectified knowledge.

The veridiction conditions for the mode of being-Referentially will be the various standards and measures that define what is to qualify as equipped and rectified knowledge. This will include issues relating to whether or not the chains of Reference supporting the knowledge being claimed are well made or poorly made, e.g., has the laboratory experiment been well designed or poorly designed, have all the relevant variables been controlled for, is the sample size statistically significant, are the test results reliable, repeatable, and so on. It is these more epistemically oriented considerations that will be most important here, for they will determine what is to count as knowledge in this Referential sense.

A central feature of ‘objectivity’ in the mode of being-Referentially is the sense that one’s viewpoint is never limited to the particular context in which one happens to be situated, but that one can view the world from any perspective as it were, free from any determinate limits. In Latour’s account, this Referential sense of objectivity is not ‘the view from nowhere’ as many in the tradition have mistakenly claimed, but what I would call *the view from anywhere*, a capacity to access beings of any kind anywhere through the mediating, connecting relations of chains of Reference. Further, the sense that regardless of how long or strong our Referential chains may be we never seem to bring them to any state of epistemic completeness (a sense that Latour claims underlies the endless lamentations about thing-in-themselves within the tradition of Kantian-styled Critique) does not point to a failing or limitation inherent in the work of establishing chains of Reference, but speaks instead of the pluralistic ontology in which Reference itself is situated:

the expression “objective knowledge” (provided that it is materialized) designates a progression, an access route, a movement that will cross paths with other types of movements to which it cannot be reduced and that it cannot reduce, either. This impression that there is always something *more* than what is known in the thing known does not refer at all to the unknowable (the complaint of Critique is in no way justified) but to *the presence of other modes* whose equal dignity EPISTEMOLOGY, despite all its efforts, has never allowed to be recognized. Knowledge can grasp everything, go everywhere, but in its own mode. It is not a DOMAIN, whose expansion has to be limited or authorized. It is a network that traces its own particular trajectory, alongside other, differently qualified trajectories, which it never ceases to crisscross. (Latour, 2013, p. 85)

Within the mode of being-Referentially something will be felicitous or infelicitous depending on the extent to which it either enables and advances the possibility of equipped and rectified knowledge, or stands as an impediment to such knowledge (Latour, 2013, p. 92). The felicity conditions of Reference will thereby include anything that would enable, maintain, protect, or advance our access to information about remote beings, and anything that would disable, prohibit or otherwise interfere with or limit such access would be infelicitous. An example might be the establishment of prohibitions against certain forms of inquiry, or if we decided, for example, to put a halt to any further inquiry and rest entirely our laurals.

Access to remote beings depends, as we have seen, on the paving constituted by multiple intermediaries and on the rapid but always precarious shifting of a constant. ... Scientists can obviously decide to limit themselves to the final result alone, but then they will have dried up the resource that would allow them to gain access to *new* beings and to trace *new* paths—and they will quickly lose access, because they won't know how to maintain the roads and the means that have already been established. (Latour, 2013, p. 126)

We see such loss of knowledge portrayed in apocalyptic novels, movies and games where a person might live in a world filled with relics of automobiles, computers and other complex technologies but lack the knowledge needed to make them work, or where a person might be able to cite the conclusion of complex chain of references, e.g.,  $E=MC(2)$  without knowing explicitly what it means or what to do with it. Insofar as such people might be said to have knowledge of the things in question then, following Leibniz or Peirce the most we could say is that such knowledge would be very confused or vague. Included in such infelicitous conditions is what Latour calls the tendency for some to limit all talk to what he refers to as “straight talk.” Such posturing purports to reduce the complex and diverse conditions underlying equipped and rectified knowledge to its conclusions, as if the purely formalist nature of the outcome could somehow stand on its own independent of the conditions that both enable and sustain it. Such posturing “wants to *imitate the results* without having to encumber oneself with *imitating the burdensome process as well*” (Latour, 2013, pp. 126-131).

In what Latour calls our Modernist mindset, it is the sense of objectivity associated with the mode of being Referentially that is often taken as the standard against which all other claims, practices, realities, and so on, are to be judged, where anything that doesn't live up to the Referential standards of equipped and rectified knowledge is typically denigrated as ‘merely subjective,’ ‘merely linguistic,’ ‘mere value,’ and so on (Latour, 2013, p. 72). Under our ‘Modernist’ mindset it is the Referential sense of ‘objectivity’ that has come to define what counts as *objectivity as such*, a view which Latour's pluralistic ontology calls into question in a serious and potentially revolutionary manner. For on Latour's account objectivity does not have the univocal sense ascribed to it by the Modernist tradition, but is much more of a multivocal notion whose meaning or sense varies from mode to mode.

#### 4.2 .The mode of being-Politically

The distinct alteration that marks the mode of being-Politically or *Politics* is a trajectory of collecting and assembling that takes the form of a *self-engendering circle*, a process of discussion, debate, articulation of interests, and decision-making that is never ending, never complete. In the mode of being-Politically the multitude come together in gatherings or assemblies so that the ‘many’ become ‘one,’ in the sense that our sense of ourselves as “I” is accompanied at the same time by a sense of ourselves as “we,” as a member of a group, a *community*, or a people. Alongside the relation of many-to-one is the converse relation of ‘one-into-many’ expressed as a growing sense of individual *autonomy* among the community's members. It is this *dual* movement, this dual articulation of many-into-one and one-into-many that most distinguishes and defines the Political mode of existence (Latour, 2013, p. 350). It follows that it is not any old collective or group that qualifies as Political in its fullest, truest, richest sense, for the manner in which the assembly is formed and maintained is vital, even



constitutive. To count as Political in its proper or truest sense the process of assembling must be such as to engender the instauration of individuals as *citizens*, that is, individuals for whom the sense of community membership or “we” is accompanied at the same time by a newly engendered sense of autonomy and freedom as “I,” that is, as someone whose interests and values as an individual count as one alongside all the other individuals who constitute that community. Hence, just as the Referential mode instaures the conditions of ‘knowing subject’ and ‘object known’ as a Referential way of being-in or relating-to the collective, so too the mode of being-Politically instaures new ways of being-in or relating-to the collective that take the dual form of ‘community’ and ‘autonomous individual,’ a complex condition of engenderment that Latour characterizes as the “delicate ecology of freedom” (Latour, 2013, pp. 331-332). Just as the Referential sense of ‘knowing subject’ and ‘object known’ do not pre-exist their instauration through chains of Reference but are co-produced by them, so too the Political senses of ‘community member’ and ‘autonomous individual’ do not pre-exist the self-engendering circle of Political life, but are produced by the encircling reprise of being-Politically. Autonomy and community are not to be taken as given here, but as realities that come-to-be, that are won gradually and by degrees through the difficult and challenging work of the self-engendering Political circle (Latour, 2013, pp. 345, 372-373).

Because the instauration of the sense of community membership in the Political mode is accompanied at the same time by the instauration of the sense of individual autonomy, then the self-engendering circle of Political life will necessarily give rise to two counterbalancing realities with their own distinct tendencies. On the one hand there will be the tendency for people to see themselves as members of a community with shared aims, visions, beliefs, and so on, and on the other there will be the tendency for people to see themselves as autonomous individuals struggling to express and articulate their own particular interests, concerns, and so on. The result is a self-engendering circle of activity whose aim at assembling and unifying is necessarily and at the same time accompanied by (and ought to be so) a way of being-autonomously that will resist any efforts at unification to which these Politically autonomous citizens do not freely assent. Thus a central and constitutively vital feature of Political life will be the never ending demand that the work of gathering and assembling into communities of autonomous individuals be taken up and renewed again with no end in sight (Latour, 2013, pp. 133-134). This continuous and never ending *reprise* of the self-engendering circle is an essential aspect of the Political mode of being, one that plays a crucial role in determining the felicity and infelicity conditions of the mode of being-Politically.

From these essential differences it follows that speaking well within the Political mode will be very different from speaking well in the mode of Reference, for Politics is not aimed at securing and advancing equipped and rectified knowledge, but at something entirely distinct and markedly its own, namely, the instauration of autonomous individuals in freely assembled communities. Unlike the veridiction conditions of Reference, which center around the conditions needed to access remote beings, the veridiction conditions of Politics center around “the particular type of *reason* with which public life is charged,” a space of reasons that is oriented not around the growth of equipped and rectified knowledge, but around “MATTERS OF CONCERN,” that is, issues, controversies, disagreements, and so on, that call us together in a manner that will allow us to deal with them as individual members of an assembly or community (Latour, 2013, pp. 333-337). The interrelated ends of community and autonomy that are central to Political life will thus require a much wider variety of ways of speaking well than might be found within the mode of Reference, for such Political speaking will require multitudinous ways

of *circling* around the many interests, concerns, and issues that arise, engaging and speaking to each of its participants in a manner that enables them to willingly take up and assent to the vision or compromise engendered as something of their own. (Latour, 2013, p. 341) This requires a special kind of skill, one that is capable of remaining sensitive and adaptable to a variety of contexts and circumstances across a wide variety of individual expressions of interest and concern. It requires a manner of speaking that Latour characterizes as “*a truth of curves*,” a form of language that is best fitted to satisfying the challenging demands of advancing the dual values of community and autonomy. Such speaking requires extreme “freedom of movement,” flexibility, and a skillfulness in the use of words that must remain unconstrained by any of the other forms of veridiction (Latour, 2013, p. 347-348). It might be the case, for example, that some arguments forms that are permissible within Politics would be disavowed within Reference, but this wouldn’t make one any better or more rigorous than the other, it would simply be an expression of an essential difference that preserves and protects the special dignity and value of each mode.

The difference between the Political and Referential is expressed historically in the tension between *episteme* and Rhetoric (or *logos* and *mythos*), a tension in which the Rhetorician is typically criticized and chastised for not living up to the standards of ‘Truth’ in its epistemic or Referential sense. Latour, however, reverses this traditional argument, chastising Socrates for portraying the Political as a corrupted form of Reference, a category mistake whose effects still echo throughout the Western tradition. It is not Socrates, claims Latour, who most recognizes and acknowledges the value and dignity of the Political, but the Sophists whose mastery of the art of speaking in curves and circles serves as a classical model of what it means to speak well within the Political mode, a point that is reiterated in Aristotle’s recognition of Rhetoric as a subject matter that has a dignity and value of its own (Latour, 2013, pp. 262-263, 273-274, 349).

It follows that the felicity and infelicity conditions of Politics will reside in the extent to which one’s manner of speaking satisfies and advances the dual requirements of community and autonomy. Put crudely anything that works to secure, maintain, and advance the conditions of community *and* autonomy through the continuous, unending reprise of the Political circle will be felicitous within the Political mode, and anything that works to undermine or threaten the dual conditions of community and autonomy or that works to interrupt or stop the continuous reprise of the self-engendering circle will be infelicitous within the Political mode (Latour, 2013, pp. 342, 344, 350, 355).

These beings, too, are “manners of speaking,” in a way; consequently, they too become endangered languages once there are no more speakers to *speak them well*. We can understand that it would be enough to ruin all hope for a possible civilization if political speech, following the same path as religious speech, were lost for good. (Latour, 2013, p. 329)

Included among the infelicitous conditions of Politics is what Latour refers to as “straight talk,” for such posturing mistakenly approaches Politics in the Socratic vein as a corrupted form of Reference, a corruption that it proposes to reform by bringing what it takes to be the more ‘literal’ language of *episteme* as a corrective to the ‘crookedness’ of Political forms of speech. But however laudable such efforts may appear, they rest, claims Latour, on a number of very troublesome and potentially dangerous category mistakes, including: (a) Failing to recognize Politics as a distinct mode unto itself, (b) Failing to properly understand the complex nature of

the networks that underlie the epistemic reliability attained within the mode of Reference, and (c) Failing to recognize and respect the felicity and infelicity conditions needed to sustain the dignity and values unique to the mode of being-Politically. On Latour's account, being-Politically has a dignity of its own that counts for just as much as being-Referentially, for it engenders and protects important values that are unique to it and that would be lost if the felicity conditions that are central to Politics were threatened or undermined.

#### 4.3. The mode of being-Legally

The distinct alteration that marks the mode of being-Legally or *Law* is a trajectory that links together various cases, decisions, actions, and so on through what is generally referred to as *legal means*. It is widely acknowledged that engaging with the 'legal world' requires a modal shift of some sort, and we generally recognize that a different interpretive stance is required in order to "take things legally." When such a shift has been signalled we recognize that the manner of speaking, the ways of judging, even the meanings of terms within the Legal mode will be importantly different from other ways of speaking, judging, and so on. As Latour (2013) himself puts it, Law "has its own mode of veridiction, certainly different from that of Science, but universally acknowledged as capable of distinguishing truth and falsity in its own way" (pp. 358-359). Importantly, even though most of us who live 'outside' the Legal mode have no clear understanding of the peculiar trajectory and veridiction conditions operating 'inside' the Legal system we still widely recognize and acknowledge that there is something distinct and unique about Law that requires this kind of Legally oriented modal shift. The Legal case thus serves as a good example of the kind of shift that Latour claims takes place whenever we move from mode to mode, where speaking ontologically, for example, is recognized as importantly different from speaking epistemically, speaking scientifically importantly different from speaking politically, and so on. While this is true for all modes, on Latour's account, we see it more readily in the Legal case, allowing it to serve as an exemplar of the kind of modal shift that takes place whenever we cross over from mode to mode. The vividness of the Legal case also points to the importance of the Prepositional mode, for it is this mode more than anything else that allows us to recognize another mode from the 'outside' as it were, even though we may not be proficient or 'in-the-know' about what is going on within that mode.

Viewed from the point of view of Reference, Law is often chastised as being "*superficial and formal*," but according to Latour (2013), far from being detrimental to Law these are among its most important and constitutive features (p. 361). Law works by bringing particular *cases* or *facts* under *principles* through the "due diligence" of *Legal means*, a process that "makes it possible to connect enunciators and utterances by invisible threads," and in the process bring about a special kind of continuity between past and present that expresses itself in the general notion of Legal responsibility (Latour, 2013, pp. 365-367, 370). Through the connective work of Legal means past actions, statements, commitments, etc. are rendered continuous with one's present and future 'self' in a way that is Legally binding, engendering that special, extremely formal sense of identity that is peculiar to the mode of Law. In its special, continuity-building function Law turns out to be the only mode that is inherently and almost exclusively backward looking, establishing a special kind of connection between what may be, what is, and what has been that instaurates "the miracle of proceeding as though, by particular linkages, *we were held to what we say and what we do*. What you have done, signed, said, promised, given, *engages* you" (Latour, 2013, pp. 369-370). This purely formalistic process is seen as superficial from the

point of view of Reference because it neither conveys nor produces information in the Referential sense, as equipped and rectified knowledge, and so appears “without content” from that point of view (Latour, 2013, p. 370). Nevertheless it is through the continuities established within Law that we become ‘legal subjects,’ individuals whose special Legal sense of identity establishes connections to and responsibilities for actions and commitments that extend into the past, a purely formal yet legally binding sense of identity through which notions of authorship, ownership, and so on are established and sustained (Latour, 2013, p. 370). Undermine this form of Legal continuity, e.g., by the loss of one’s birth certificate, for example, and your connection to the past becomes increasingly tenuous, diminishing your status as a Legal subject.

The veridiction conditions peculiar to and constitutive of the mode of being-Legally are to be found in the purely formal, procedural requirements associated with due diligence or due process in the special, Legal sense of those terms. It is the extent to which arguments follow or conform to the standards of *due diligence* that determines whether they will be considered good or bad, better or worse, and so on, within the Legal mode. Thus it is possible that forms of argument that may seem tenuous or weak within the modes of Reference or Politics, for example, may be perfectly valid within the mode of being-Legally as long as they satisfy the special Legal demands of due diligence.

Arguments, claims, ways of speaking, and so on will be felicitous within Law if they protect and preserve its formal, procedural character, whereas conditions that would undermine or threaten the purely formal, backward turn of Law’s connective process would be infelicitous to that mode. Thus it would be infelicitous to demand that Legal procedures be condemned and rejected because they fail to engender equipped and rectified knowledge in the Referential sense or because they don’t promote the existence of a healthy, self-engendering circle in the Political sense, for such standards and aims have little to do with Legal process (Latour, 2013, p. 364). It would be equally infelicitous to expect Legal judgments to be just in a psychological or Moral sense, for the Legal sense of justice is importantly distinct from those other notions which, while valuable and important in their own right, fall outside the mode of Law as such.

When I require of a judgment rendered in court that it also provide me with the closure that would allow me to “get over it,” as it were, I am asking the impossible, since the type of closure provided by the legal apparatus in no way aims—this becomes painfully clear to me—at offering reparations to my psyche; its goal is merely to connect texts with facts and with other texts through the intermediary of opinions according to the dizzying itinerary that is qualified, though not described, by terms we have already encountered, MEANS or procedure. The same thing would be true, moreover, if I expected that a ruling in favor of compensating victims would “objectively” establish the truth of the matter. The judge, if she is honest, will say that she has settled the “legal truth” but not the “objective” truth in the case at hand. If she knows some Latin, as every legal professional is prone to do, she will cite the Latin adage according to which judgment is *pro veritate habetur* (“taken as the truth”): neither more nor less. If she is something of a philosopher, she will ask that people “stop confusing” the legal requirements of truth with the scientific requirements of truth, means with proof—and even more with the psychological requirement of intimate reparations—not to mention the social requirement of fairness. “All that,” she

will say, “has to be carefully differentiated.” And she will be right. (Latour, 2013, p. 54)

We see these kinds of category mistakes, as well as the confusion and disappointment that accompanies them, all the time, but calls to reform the mode of Law by making it conform to or satisfy the veridication conditions or standards of another mode would be infelicitous to the Legal mode of existence and a serious threat to its dignity and the special values it enables, secures, and defends. We might advocate on the basis of these other considerations that certain laws to be revised, removed, or established, but on Latour’s account we should let the discussion of Legal means and due process be handled within the Legal mode in a strictly Legal manner.

#### 4.4. The mode of being-Morally

The distinct alteration that marks the mode of *Morality* is a trajectory that traces the tension inherent in relations between *means* and *ends*, a tension that is intrinsic to the very ontology of being-as-other. As already noted, since the existence of any being can only be sustained through “the supreme duty to explore through what other beings it must pass to subsist, to earn its subsistence” (Latour, 2013, p. 454), then existence necessarily involves existing through or by way of a relation to some other. Such a relation gives rise to an ambiguity and tension between means and ends that becomes the principal point of attention within the mode of being-Morally. In fact it is the condition of being troubled by the ambiguity and tension in relations between means and ends that stands as a defining feature of the mode of being-Morally, for it is the troubled nature of the Moral mode of being that moves one to try and determine the basis of this condition and to seek some way to resolve it in a Morally acceptable manner.

Now, if we have properly understood the treasure of alterities that being-as-other keeps in its bosom, an enigma is posed to every existent: “If I exist only *through the other*, which of us then is the *end* and which the *means*? I, who have to *pass by way of* it, am I its means or is it mine? Am I the end or is it my end? This is the problem of the FOURTH GROUP that we shall no longer be able to escape when we start to follow the course of action that attaches long chains of means and ends; and the longer the chain, the more tormenting the questions. (Latour, 2013, p. 454)

In the mode of being-Morally the tension between means and ends that is inherent within the ontology of being-as-other presses upon one as a sense of anxiety, a Morally distinct feeling of responsibility that is importantly different from the highly formal sense of responsibility associated with Law, for this Moral sense arises from the very nature of the relations of existence as such and the beings involved in those relations (Latour, 2013, p. 457) This special, almost existential feeling of Moral responsibility plays itself out in

*the reprise of scruples about the optimal distribution of ends and means. If every existent remakes the world in its own way and according to its own viewpoint, its supreme value is of course that of existing on its own, as Whitehead says, but it can in no case shed the anxiety of having left in the shadows, like so many mere means, the multitude of those, the others, that have allowed it to exist and about*

which it is never very sure that they are not its *finality*. And it is obviously not a question of human beings alone. (Latour, 2013, p. 455)

The *scruples* that are inherent in and constitutive of the mode of being-Morally compel us to “ask questions after the fact,” that is, after we have secured the conditions of existence in some relevant sense. Inherent in such questioning are concerns about whether we may have acted wrongly and could have acted better, a process that calls on us to more thoroughly examine the nature of the means/ends relations in which we are involved in the hope of finding more optimal ways of securing and protecting the inherent value of all involved as both means and ends in-themselves (Latour, 2013, p. 459). In its initial phase such questioning calls on us to discover the source of our unease, a Moral call to actively and self-critically examine our past actions in order to disclose any wrongs we may have committed.

It does not suffice to be simply troubled, vaguely uneasy: we have to *commit* to a new movement of exploration in order to verify the *overall quality* of all the links. Here we have a unique requirement... What torments us is the commitment to a new adventure of *verification* of the thing about which the first scruple was just a fuzzy starting point. This is what defines the truth of the moral sense, or rather its gradual validation. The particular, almost technical pass of morality lies in giving itself the means to go still further in the groping that makes it possible to validate or falsify what the initial uneasiness had only sensed. (Latour, 2013, p. 460)

As noted, in the effort to resolve these concerns the mode of being-Morally looks for some way to optimize the complex of values, both as means and ends, a hope that Latour admits is an impossible task.

*Everything must be combined insofar as possible even though everything is incommensurable.* It is necessary to reach the optimum even though there is no way to optimize that optimum by any calculation at all, since, by definition, the beings whose relations of ends and means must be *measured* do not and must not have *any common measure*, because each one of them can also be counted *as an end*. (Here, at least, Kant succeeded in registering moral quality, even though he reserved it to humans alone.) Goods and evils cannot be weighed against one another, and yet *they must be weighed*. (Latour, 2013, p. 461)

The task is made impossible by the very nature of the conditions of existence per se, for no matter how careful and exhaustive one's critical scrutiny may be the sheer complexity of the relations of means and ends in which one is involved will always call for more, leaving one haunted by the worry that one could always have tried a little harder or done a little more.

When you set our as a moral being, everything is *yours*, everything concerns you, preoccupies you, worries you... The originality of this mode of being lies right here: it knows no limits... As soon as it sees a limit, it has scruples about not trying to surpass it. By limiting itself, by believing itself to be quits, is it making a terrible mistake? (Latour 2013, p. 461)

This sense that there is always more that one could and *should* have done, beings whose value one might have dismissed too rashly, values or ends that one may have overlooked, and so on, is an essential ingredient of the Moral mode of being, a sense that the door should never be close too quickly or completely no matter how thorough, how exhaustive one's efforts at resolving the tension between means and ends may have been. Such a standpoint involves trying "ever subtler experiments to bring the greatest number to share in the reprise of the optimum," an endless task that one nevertheless feels compelled to attempt no matter how impossible, how 'Sisyphean' it might appear (Latour, 2013, p. 464).

The veridiction conditions of Morality have to do with determining how well, i.e., how thoroughly, carefully, fairly, etc., one is able to explore the conditions that underlie one's sense of unease in the treatment of others. Put simply, there are going to be better and worse ways of following through on one's moral scruples, better and worse ways of responding to the special sense of Moral responsibility that is central to the mode of being-Morally, and one's standing as a Moral being will be judged by how well one lives up to those standards (Latour, 2013, p. 460). It follows that arguments, claims, and other conditions will be Morally felicitous if they enable or, better yet, invite the difficult work of moral scrutiny, whereas conditions that discourage such scrutiny or, worse, bring it to a halt will be Morally infelicitous. Thus, attempts to reduce Moral actions to a purely formal process of calculation as found in some forms of Utilitarianism and Economics will be infelicitous to the Moral mode of being, for such shortcuts serve to undermine and threaten the very conditions that are essential to and constitutive of a Moral way of being (Latour, 2013, pp. 460-467). The same holds true for attempts to ground Moral issues and concerns in a set of universal principles or absolute laws such as we find in the philosophy of Kant or Kantian-based theories, for such efforts give rise to what Latour calls a kind of *moralism* that, rather than enabling and inviting the difficult work of wrestling with one's scruples, function instead to distance oneself from such concerns by bringing the entire process of moral examination and moral justification to a categorically absolute conclusion or end (Latour, 2013, p. 456). Such moralism is a prime example of what Latour calls *bad transcendence*.

As with each mode, re rediscover the opposition between good and bad  
TRANSCENDENCE: carefully preserving the distance between the commensurable and incommensurable makes for transcendence; extracting oneself from situations to see the "external" viewpoint that alone makes it possible to "judge" situations that otherwise would remain merely "factual" is the classic example of bad transcendence that tips you outside experience, or, better, outside moral experimentation, and leads to MORALISM. (Latour, 2013, p. 462)

Such Kantian-styled moralism (and it comes in many forms) is likely the result of attempting to treat moral issues using the standards or veridiction conditions of other modes of existence such as Reference or Law, regarding values as if there were akin to remote beings that we could come to 'know' through some purely formal Referential process, or regarding moral concerns as akin to Legal cases that can be judged by bringing them under some prior principle. On Latour's account most of the work in meta-ethics and ethical theory would likely be guilty of these kinds of category mistakes and, rather than advancing the conditions of moral life as their proponents profess, they actually work to undermine the integrity and dignity of the conditions necessary to being-Morally, threatening the special values of care, concern, responsibility, and so on, that are engendered within that mode.

## 5. The crossing of modes

Latour's ontology of being-as-other implies that there must be considerable interaction between the various modes. Such interaction is signalled both by the extent to which beings instaurated in one mode are taken up within others, and by the prevalence of category mistakes resulting from interpreting claims, arguments, and so on in the wrong modal key. Latour refers to the place where two modes intersect as a *crossing*, and it is here that much of the confusion, passion, and interesting cross-fertilization that occurs between modes takes place.

It is important to recall here that no mode is universal or ontologically basic and that no mode is reducible to another. To be is to always to be in some mode or other with the Leibnizean or Whiteheadian consequence that each mode serves as a particular perspective on the collective, a perspective that is unique to and constitutive of that mode. Since each mode will necessarily view the world through its peculiar lens then we will inevitably tend to interpret, assess, evaluate, and judge all things through the operating conditions that are constitutive of the mode in which we happen to be immersed. Thus a person immersed within the mode of being-Morally will tend to see moral issues everywhere, while someone immersed within the mode of being-Legally will tend to interpret everything in purely formal, procedural terms, and so on.

Given the highly relational, context dependent nature of this pluralistic ontology it would seem to follow that claims and arguments too will be highly context or domain sensitive so that how a given claim or argument 'looks,' i.e., how it is taken, interpreted, assessed, and so on, will depend upon the nature of the mode within which one is operating. Thus a person immersed within the mode of Reference will tend to judge all claims or arguments against the *epistemic* standards of equipped and rectified knowledge, while someone immersed within the mode of Politics will tend to view the same claims or arguments in terms of their 'practical' efficacy in securing the conditions of autonomy and community within the self-engendering circle of Political life. It would also seem to follow that conditions that are of vital or great importance within one mode may be irrelevant, perhaps even detrimental within another. Thus the Referential requirements for setting up a valid experiment or constructing a valid inductive argument, for example, may have very little importance for the examination of means/ends relations within the mode of being-Morally, and the purely formal, procedural requirements of a well-constructed Legal argument may turn out to be irrelevant, perhaps even detrimental to the formation of a well-constructed Political argument. Put crudely, each mode will have its own dignity and value, as well as its own perspectival 'bias' if you will, an inevitability of which we should be mindful when immersed within a mode and when crossing from mode to mode. I place the term 'bias' in scare quotes here because the very notion of a bias presupposes a 'non-biased' standard or reference point from which the biased condition diverges in some way, but on the account outlined here there can be no universal, non-biased reference point, for every mode, every viewpoint will always privilege itself. The one possible exception here, if it can be called that, is the mode of being-Prepositionally, for this is the only mode whose distinct alteration involves alerting one to the interpretive key of other modes. It is the extent to which a Preposition prepares you, not for itself, but for another mode that marks its unique veridiction condition (Latour, 2013, pp. 58-62). It is the special form of 'neutrality' that is peculiar to the mode of being-Prepositionally that allows it to serve as the vantage point from which to examine and describe the other modes, a point that Latour admits is the vantage point adopted in his own work.



Thus while I have spoken all along of an inquiry and even of a questionnaire, it is not in the mode of knowledge that I claim to be working. The term “inquiry” has to be taken in a plurimodal sense whose object is to preserve the diversity of modes. Can we call this approach “empirical philosophy”? I am not sure, given how indifferent philosophy has become to the task of description. Experimental metaphysics? Cosmopolitics? Comparative anthropology? Practical ontology? Mailman Cheval will surely have made more than one discovery along this way that can serve as an emblem for this enterprise. To situate this reprise of the rationalist adventure, but to mark clearly that it will not take place under the auspices of Double Click, I have entrusted it to the term *diplomacy*. Values, if they are not to disappear, have to be diplomatically negotiated. A practical RELATIONISM that seeks, in a protocol of relationship-building and benchmarking, to avoid the ravages of RELATIVISM—that absolutism of a single point of view. (Latour, 2013, p. 481).

The modal standpoint of *diplomat*, a position of ‘neutrality’ that enables a purely *descriptive* point of view with respect to the other modes, is central to and constitutive of the Prepositional mode of being. It is not the perspective of the ‘knowing-subject’ engendered within Reference (a sense of ‘objectivity’ that allows one to adopt the perspective of the ‘object-known’) but a form of objectivity as a special sense of ‘neutrality’ that signals or opens one up to the distinct presence and requirements of *another* mode. It follows of course that this paper has also been written in the diplomatic mode of being-Prepositionally, and hence is an expression of the neutral, descriptive objectivity peculiar to that mode.

## 6. Can arguments and argument forms cross from mode to mode?

The simple answer to the question of whether arguments and argument forms can cross between modes would seem to be ‘Yes,’ *as long as the arguments or argument forms in question are not infelicitous to the mode in question*. Some examples may help illustrate the point. For the purposes of this paper we shall assume that the arguments outlined have been well supported following the standards or veridiction conditions peculiar to the mode in which they were developed so that each argument is regarded as a *good argument* within its originating mode.

Example A) A series of carefully constructed chains of Reference, e.g., field studies, experiments, etc. reliably supports the following conclusions:

- 1) A virus is responsible for a class of deformities in newborn humans.
- 2) Mosquitos are the principal means for the transmission of the virus in question.
- 3) Limiting the interactions between pregnant women and mosquitos in infected regions should help prevent the spread of these deformities in human infants.

One can easily envisage this argument being taken up and crossing over into the Political mode as part of a persuasive argument for implementing policies and practices aimed at reducing interactions between pregnant women and mosquitos. Such Political use of the argument would

not appear to be infelicitous to the mode of Reference because it does not challenge the epistemic reliability of the argument but trusts it, drawing upon its Referential authority as a reliable knowledge claim to enhance its persuasiveness within the Political mode. Such use would also not seem to be infelicitous within the Political mode either as long as the argument was not used to undermine the dual conditions of autonomy and community in the broad sense outlined above. If, however, the argument was used to try and justify moving towards an authoritarian police state then it could work to undermine the dignity and values intrinsic to the Political mode of being.

We can imagine the same Referential argument being taken up within the Legal mode for the purposes of establishing ownership of a patent on the testing procedures used for detecting the virus in question. Again such Legal use would not seem to be infelicitous to the mode of Reference for it doesn't challenge the Referential status of the argument but trusts it, taking it up as a means of establishing the sense of authorship that is central to the Legal mode. Such use would also not seem to be infelicitous to the Legal mode as long as it does not threaten the requirements of due process that are constitutive of the Legal mode of being.

Example B) A Legal case that follows the careful, painstaking work of due process leads to the following conclusions:

- 1) Circumstantial evidence in a criminal sexual assault trial points to the guilt of the male accused.
- 2) Factual evidence also points to the guilt of the accused.
- 3) The testimony of key female witnesses in the trial is judged to be unreliable.
- 4) The male charged with the sexual offenses in question is declared not guilty.

We can imagine this Legal argument being taken up within the Moral mode as a worry or concern that a certain group of people, in this case female victims of sexual assault, are not being treated in a way that is respectful of their dignity and their value as ends in-themselves. Such a crossing would not be infelicitous to the Legal mode as long as the validity of the original judgment was respected and accepted, but if the original Legal judgment were to be overturned because of its failure to live up to the Moral standards of veridiction then that would appear to be a category mistake that could indeed be infelicitous to the Legal mode of being and the values it engenders and protects.

We can imagine this same argument being taken up within the Political mode (prompted perhaps by the Moral concerns noted above) as a call to reform the legal system by amending the laws as they already exist or putting in place new laws that might promote a greater sense of inclusiveness and autonomy for victims of sexual assault. Again such a Political crossing would not appear to be infelicitous to the Legal mode as long as the original Legal judgment was respected and preserved, and while such a crossing might well result in the reform of existing laws or the introduction of new laws this would still be okay as long as future cases under the new or reformed laws are judged following the standards of due process appropriate to the Legal mode.

We might imagine this Legal argument being taken up in a very different way within Reference, not by taking up the particular argument but its argument *form*. We can imagine, for example, someone within the mode of Reference assuming that the since the argument is valid Legally then its argument form should also be valid Referentially, where the conditions of

validity within one mode are presumed to be preserved when transferred to another mode. While this kind of move might not be infelicitous to Law, it could well be infelicitous to the mode of Reference, for such a move could actually threaten the veridiction conditions of Reference by weakening or undermining the standards of equipped and rectified knowledge in the strong Referential sense of those terms. If so, then such formal crossings should be undertaken with great care with special consideration being given to the felicity and infelicity conditions of the mode or modes in question.

## 7. Conclusion

If we take seriously the modal pluralism outlined here then this might have important implications for the study of Argumentation. First it would seem to imply that the proper study of arguments and argumentation requires that we approach, examine, and assess arguments in the interpretive key appropriate to the mode in which they were developed or employed. Thus when assessing Political arguments, for example, we should be careful not to judge them using the criteria and standards appropriate to a different mode such as Reference, declaring such arguments to be invalid because they fail to satisfy the Referential veridiction conditions associated with equipped and rectified knowledge. We should also be careful when taking up arguments or argument forms from other modes, making sure we do so in a way that is mindful and respectful of the felicity and infelicity conditions of the modes in question. Similar considerations apply to our use of and appeal to standards of objectivity, for while this kind of pluralistic, relationist account avoids the pitfalls of relativism by affirming a strong sense of objectivity *internal to* a given mode, objectivity in general is still multivocal rather than univocal and it is imperative that we keep the modally-relative sense of the term always in mind. We would therefore need to be very careful when trying to extend a sense of objectivity from mode to mode.

Second, this kind of pluralistic account might also have important implications for the study of argument forms, for it could well be that different argument forms have their origin in different modes of existence. If so then this could have revolutionary consequences for the study of argumentation in general, for much of the work in argumentation seems to presuppose either that all argument forms are reducible to some commonly shared veridiction conditions (e.g., universal ‘logical’ standards), or that everything is relative in a radical subjectivist or cultural sense, with no middle ground as it were. Put crudely, it is usually regarded either that all arguments can be assessed from a single, universal logical standpoint, or that any appeal to such standards is ultimately arbitrary in some fundamental sense. On this traditional account, argument validity is typically assumed to be univocal, with a single set of validity conditions taken to apply across all argument forms. On the pluralistic account outlined here, however, it seems highly plausible that some argument forms might actually have originated or been developed within ontologically distinct modes of existence. If so, then the validity conditions for judging argument forms might vary in important ways from mode to mode, with *validity* itself being *multivocal* rather than univocal. It is plausible, for example, that deductive forms of argument could have arisen within the Legal mode of existence as a way of working out the implications that might follow from bringing a particular case under a given principle. Such non-epistemic origins could be important for understanding certain capacities or limits that might be inherent within that argument form. It might help explain, for example, why Deductive forms of argument seem to add so little to our knowledge when used within the mode of being-

Referentially, serving more as a method of explication rather than a means for the amplification or growth of knowledge. Taking up another example, it seems plausible that Narrative forms of argumentation could also have non-epistemic origins, perhaps being expressions of the veridiction conditions unique to the mode of Fiction, for example, as a means of developing and opening up possible worlds rather than a means of conveying information or Referential knowledge about remote entities. This might explain why, for example, Narrative forms often appear somewhat tenuous when placed within an epistemic or Referential context, for their original function may have had little or nothing to do with accessing remote beings, but something else entirely. Recognizing and appreciating the modal origins of various argument forms might thus be extremely beneficial for understanding their potential strengths and limits when operating within a given mode and when crossing from mode to mode.

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